

Article

Twenty-Five ASA Fellows and Editors Tell of PSCF Articles That Changed Their Lives

impactful about this article was that it shattered my impression that a nonliteral interpretation simply dismisses what the Bible says in these early chapters of Genesis. Instead, I found a far deeper and richer explanation of the text than I had ever seen.

I ended up getting the position and one of the courses I developed dealt with evolution. This Kline article was one of the readings for the class. Over 25 years later, I am still teaching a course on origins and the Kline article is still on the reading list, along with several other *PSCF* articles. I have found *PSCF* to be a tremendous resource for Christians navigating their way through difficult topics in a way that attempts to do justice both to scripture and science, God's two ways of revealing himself in the world.

Tony Jelsma, Dordt University, Sioux Center, Iowa.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.56315/PSCF9-23Gonzalez>

1997

KEITH B. and RUTH DOUGLAS MILLER, "Taking the Road Less Traveled: Reflections on Entering Careers in Science," *PSCF* 49, no. 4 (1997): 212-14.

I learned about the American Scientific Affiliation in 1997, three years after graduating as a biologist from a state university in Peru. At that time, I worked as a science professor in a high school in Lima and volunteered at a nature conservation association. There were few opportunities for biologists, so I wasn't sure if I should either pursue graduate studies that would enhance my research abilities, or dedicate my life to children's education. After becoming an ASA member, I loved reading about evolution, astronomy, human origins, and other topics Christian scientists wrote about in the *PSCF* journal. One of the first articles I read was a short reflection in the young scientists' corner, "Taking the Road Less Traveled: Reflections on Entering Careers in Science," by Keith and Ruth Miller. Their road less traveled was pursuing careers in science as a Christian calling.

As a Christian, I always have had a passion for God and nature. But at that time, I struggled to see the connection between my faith and the academic world. The only connection available between my evangelical faith and science in the church was the teaching of the young earth creationists (YEC). As the Millers described in their article, I saw in my

local church how science was considered an apologetic tool to contradict evolution and not for proper stewardship of creation. I had much comfort in doing this stewardship of creation because that was a better connection between science and faith than YEC, and I had failed miserably trying to be a YEC apologist. It was good that ASA changed my mind!

As the Millers, I was part of the equivalent of the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship at the university where I earned my undergraduate degree in Peru. I also had a role model, a Christian professor who taught botany. I was able to do research with him. "How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1). That unity of mind means for me knowing that God is the creator and that he is not just in our religious life but in all aspects of our lives. I lived this experience at Bible study groups at the university and the first time I attended an ASA meeting in 1999. The Millers also mentioned that graduate school studies are more focused and serious. The eager pursuit of truth in a holistic sense that they described, motivated me to start graduate studies in 1998. Even though I was very busy as a graduate student, I found Christian community that honors the life of the mind. As the authors narrated, I also learned about the diversity of the body of Christ, considering different theological positions.

Almost at the end of their article, the Millers place three challenges for the evangelical church in the United States: (1) Let the youth be professionals and serve God with their talents, (2) Value divergent viewpoints that are tangential to the core Christian beliefs, and (3) Encourage reflection about faith and the current world situation. These challenges could be applied well to the church in Latin American countries and elsewhere. I welcome these challenges and hope our churches now accept them, too.

The final words of encouragement in the Millers' article were vital to make my decision to pursue graduate studies and get more into research. "In studying the processes of the natural world, you are watching the hand of God at work. By striving to understand the workings of creation, you are equipping yourself to fulfill the stewardship mandate given to us by God."

After 26 years, I am honored to be part of ASA, a scientific and Christian community that honors Jesus

and the study of his creation. I am still working in education at a university level and researching natural sciences. I thank God and the Millers for all their essay meant to me.

Oscar Gonzalez, Anderson University, Anderson, South Carolina.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.56315/PSCF9-23Greuel>

2001

PETER RÜST (RUEST), "Creative Providence in Biology," *PSCF* 53, no. 3 (2001): 179–83.

Ever since I came to faith in Christ as a sophomore in high school, I have been convinced of God's loving care for me, his provision for my needs, and his guidance in my everyday life. At specific moments in my life, the timing of certain events, the awareness of key insights at the right time, or the provision of specific resources or opportunities just when they were needed were so extraordinary that I knew without a doubt that they were "God things" rather than just the products of my own wisdom and resourcefulness, the generosity of others, or blind luck. No violations of natural law characterized any of these cases—just an impeccable timing that convinced me these were the product of divine actions. There are many passages of scripture I could point to that are consistent with this conclusion (e.g., Prov. 3:5–6; Matt. 6:25–34; Matt. 7:7–11; Phil. 4:19).

I have long held the view that God, as Creator and Sustainer of all that exists, designed the universe so that physical structures (galaxies, stars, planets) formed and complex biological organisms (bacteria, amphibians, reptiles, humans, etc.) evolved by natural processes according to the very laws he created. But exactly how do we describe the mode of divine action in this evolutionary creation (i.e., theistic evolution) model for God's creation of living things? Were the physical properties of matter and the natural laws that God created enough to account for the emergence of life on this planet and its subsequent diversification and complexity? Or was God's ongoing activity required to guide the entire process? In 2001, Peter Rüst published a communication in *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* that addressed these questions. This paper resonated with me based on my training as a biologist and my observations of God's providence in my personal life and the lives of others.

Rüst proposed, on both theological and scientific grounds, that God's creative and providential activities have *not* ceased after his initial creation, but that they are continuous, and usually hidden. God's divine actions in creation, or "hidden options" as Rüst called them, may include "quantum uncertainties, randomness in elementary events, unpredictability due to minute parameter value deviations in nonlinear systems liable to produce deterministic chaos, and coincidences." According to Rüst, these "hidden options" do not represent violations of any natural laws, but they are "specific acts of *selection* among distributions of many different naturally possible values for stochastic variables." He cited, as a hypothetical example, the spontaneous occurrence of specific *combinations* of mutations required for the emergence of a certain enzyme activity that may be "transastronomically improbable" in the context of strictly *undirected*, random processes alone.

Rüst argued effectively in this paper that the proposed "hidden options" model did not represent "God-of-the-Gaps" type speculation that may be a shortcoming in other models for divine action in creation. He maintained, for example, that there are no gaps in "creation's economy," to use language similar to Howard Van Till, "as all materials and their properties were fully in place and well equipped to proceed anywhere in development ("Basil, Augustine, and the Doctrine of Creation's Functional Integrity," *Science and Christian Belief* 8 [April 1996]: 21–38)." It is more an issue of the limited time available for "random-walk trials." Sometimes specific direction by God is required to guide the process of evolution through the virtual infinitude of "possibility space."

The beauty of Rüst's "hidden options" proposal is that it is consistent with scriptural teaching on God's role as Creator and Sustainer of the universe and all living things while explaining *how* God may have used the evolutionary process as a means for creating the diversity of life on this planet. At the same time, it does not contradict the abundant evidence for evolution that has been obtained by scientific investigation. Moreover, it accords with our experience of God's providential work in our everyday lives and in history.

Brian Greuel, Emeritus John Brown University, Siloam Springs, Arkansas.